



News Release

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Summer's here! Fire up the grill and eat outdoors — and handle food safely
Surprisingly, most people don't know how to properly cook meat

OLYMPIA — Barbecues and picnics are popular summer pastimes, but a new survey shows many people don't know how to properly cook or handle hamburger and other meats. Learning a few simple tips can help protect you and your family from foodborne illness this summer.

Only a third (34 percent) of the 1,000 people surveyed by an industry group knew the proper temperature to cook a hamburger; it's safe to eat when the internal temperature reaches 160°F. Some people think they know how to tell when burgers and other meats are cooked thoroughly, but misinformation may put them at risk. For example, one in five said making sure the hamburger is brown inside is the best approach — food safety experts say that's not an accurate way to ensure the burger is cooked all the way. Almost 20 percent said checking to see if juices run clear ensures the food is safe — another bad idea when it comes to your health.

“People often unknowingly take risks with outdoor cooking and eating that they normally wouldn't take in their kitchen,” said State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes. “Thoroughly cooking meats, properly handling produce, and remembering to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold are keys to keeping a fun picnic from turning your stomach.”

Undercooked meats, cross contamination, and improperly handled food can be a source of foodborne illness. *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, *Listeria*, and *Campylobacter* bacteria can cause diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, fever, and chills. Young children, people over 50, and those with weak immune systems are at higher risk for serious illness.

Among the most basic and important prevention tool is to wash your hands when preparing food and before eating. Keep raw meat (and meat juices) from touching other foods, utensils, and preparation areas. Use a thermometer to make sure food's fully cooked before serving. Follow these internal cooking temperatures:

- Ground beef and hamburger - 160°F
- Hot dogs - 165°F
- Steaks, roasts, and fish - 145°F
- Chicken breasts - 165°F
- Pork and egg dishes - 160°F
- Ground chicken or turkey - 165°F
- Casseroles or stuffing - 165°F

Proper storage, handling, and preparation of produce is also important. Thoroughly wash whole uncut fruits, including melons, and vegetables. Transport salads, freshly cut fruits and vegetables, and other prepared foods in a cooler. Remember to keep leftovers cold. If food's been sitting out for more than two hours, throw it out.

More [barbecue and picnic food safety tips](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/barbecuepicnictips.html) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/barbecuepicnictips.html) are on the Department of Health Web site.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov> for a healthy dose of information.